

# Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland  
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

## A Night at the Night Café

*On a frozen night in early January 2015, amazing supporters like you helped us take a leap of faith and bring MQI's Night Café into existence. It was, and still is, the only service of its kind in Ireland for people who are homeless that have completely fallen off society's radar, with nowhere left to go. There were no guarantees, and only the most limited, provisional State funding: your generosity and compassion did all the rest.*

*Five years on the Night Café still shines its beacon of hope to men and women who are the most fragile of all, literally left to the streets in the loneliest, wee hours, if not for you. On this night, we open the Night Café's door for you, and welcome you inside this place of comfort, respect, and safety that your love makes real...*

**A**s shadows fall and the reflections of street lights begin to twinkle across the River Liffey, the dedicated staff of MQI's Night Café gather behind closed doors to start their "day" – a 10-hour overnight shift that will link them in with some of the most vulnerable women and men in all of Ireland.

And in describing the Night Café, the client we'll call Donal said, "Imagine you've been out there all day.

You want to lay down. But you can't because there's a street, or a park, and you're not allowed. You're tired, you're hungry, and you have no money. No one to call. Nowhere to go. This place allows you to lay down. To sleep. It allows you to eat, to have a shower, to rest. The Night Café lets you forget the things of today and dream of something better tomorrow..."

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# A Night at the Night Café: How you bring comfort to fragile lives in the hardest hours of all...



## 9:00pm to 10:59pm the 'workday' begins

As MQI's Extended Day Service closes for another evening, Night Café staff arrive at Riverbank. It's empty and quiet for this brief window, reserved for tidying up, rolling out the sleeping mats, preparing meals, and taking stock of essential supplies stored outside the showers. Tonight there are no razors, toothbrushes but no toothpaste, and the supply of men's underwear is nearly gone. Later, when clients come in, not a single one complains. One lad smiles and says, 'I'll just pretend I have toothpaste.' They are grateful to staff.

## continuum of care

Mick, a project worker, is proud of the near-24-hour service you have created for vulnerable clients. "At 10pm staff do our handovers. If it was a particularly hard night the night before, we talk about that. Clients here aren't just a box ticked when they come in.

Everybody from the day and extended day staff pass on information to us, like 'John has a hospital appointment tomorrow at 10, please remind him.' All the donations we get, and this is from my heart, it's really, really appreciated by our clients."



## 11:00pm to 12:30am safe shelter at last

The door to the Night Café opens at 11pm. People stand patiently in the queue outside, eager to get in, but not pushing. Their faces are exhausted as they check in, put their bags down for the first time in hours, then approach the

counter for a hot meal. It's spaghetti tonight, warm and filling, and staff call clients by their names and greet each person with a smile. More sleeping mats are rolled out as people continue to file in.



## moments of mercy

It is half twelve when a new client opens the door. He is polite and soft-spoken despite a bad limp from walking the streets all day. After he gets a hot shower, one of the staff, Sandra, sits him down opposite her. Placing a clean towel in her lap, she gently takes one ragged foot at a time and dresses the massive blisters – no one has to ask her. "I'm a first responder," she tells you unaffectedly of this moment of mercy. "It's just to give that lad a bit of comfort. Even to make him feel a little bit better, I'll do the best I can then direct him to our nurse here the next morning. Our empathy, that we can help someone at the end of the day, that's what I love."

## 1:00am more clients arrive

One of the surprising things about this service you sustain is how many clients are trying to hold

down jobs while homeless. Some work shifts up until 11pm. As a result, by the time they ring the freephone to be allocated an emergency bed, the Night Café is the last resort. Without this they wouldn't even get the five hours of sleep you make possible for them here. This constant struggle for rest will continue until they can save enough to afford the ever-spiralling cost of rent.



## a matter of circumstance

Conor has relied on the Night Café for five weeks. He wants you to know that for a lot of the clients, it's down to circumstances. "Homelessness isn't just about drug use, or mental health trouble. Sometimes it's a pay cheque away. I had to pass a test in order to work, but I had a high fever. I failed the test, so they terminated my contract and I was too sick to appeal it. I've used all of MQI's services – the project workers have just helped link me in with another job."

## 2:00am the gift of hot water

By two in the morning, the sound of snoring rises and falls rhythmically from what seems like every spare inch of space. It is a far cry from shivering outside on cold ground. Tonight one shower is closed for repair, reminding everyone what you provide in funding something as precious as hot water: the showers are in continuous use through the wee hours. Each person emerges visibly more themselves – warm and clean, a gift of dignity.

## worse for women

With over ten thousand people in Ireland now homeless, the Night Café sees more and more women. Lorraine is glad to come through the door. "It's bad out there for women. There's violence. It took me awhile to get up the courage to come here, you expect it to be scary. But it's not like that at all. We're just normal people trying to sort out our lives. I always try to come here because the staff are really nice. It's safe."



## 3:00am to 4:00am someone to watch over me

The Night Café has been a fully waking service from the very start. This means that even when the latecomers drift off to sleep, staff remain nearby, watching over the men and women. One older couple requests to sleep beside staff, and their hands still touch in slumber, as



if for reassurance. A few mats down, a giant of a man tosses and turns from nightmares. He sleeps with his shoes on. Seeing nearly sixty sleeping faces, the armour of the streets finally dropped, you can't help but imagine what they've endured to find themselves here.



## 5:00am to 6:30am first light

As the first rays of light appear, a few of the clients awaken. Staff wake the rest with a kind hand on the shoulders and a friendly 'good morning.' Shift workers in particular pull themselves up slowly, rubbing their eyes. They seem so weary. In the background, other staff roll up the mats and move tables back into position as cereal, toast, jam, and butter are laid out at the counter.

## 7:00am facing the day

The Night Café closes for another of its 365 nights of the year, and the handover for the day service begins. The lad with the limp re-emerges onto the streets. He's walking noticeably better, and says thankfully, "It's my first time homeless. I like knowing that I am safe to come here, and will be welcome with open arms. I feel absolutely safe." ■

To watch a short film on the good work you make possible nearly round the clock at MQI, visit, [www.mqi.ie/film-19/](http://www.mqi.ie/film-19/)



And thank you for the dignity you bring to people who are homeless, hungry, and struggling with addiction in Ireland. We couldn't help them, without you. ♥

It's multiplying magic...

## When Can €250 Do the Good of €362?

Whenever you donate €250 or more in any given year – whether in single, multiple, or monthly donations – something magical can happen. Your signature holds the key:



At MQI, every donation large or small means that people who are homeless and hungry in Ireland will find an open door and a hot meal or a few hours of safe sleep beneath our roof. It's all thanks to your generous heart, and for that we are forever grateful.

But whenever you donate a total of €250 or more in any given year, you have the chance to [free another €112 in charity tax back from the Revenue for MQI](#) at no cost to you! It's enough to help provide nearly nineteen more meals for people in need, all for a few moments of your time, and it can't happen without you.

To transform your 2019 donations into a tax-effective gift, it takes just one easy-to-complete form that we'll post to you promptly, free. To find out if you have met the €250 qualification for this year or a previous year, you're welcome to **contact Deirdre on 01 524 0139 or [deirdre.mullen@mqi.ie](mailto:deirdre.mullen@mqi.ie)**. She'll be delighted to help you! ■



# Helping the Pets That Heal

*Every second Friday at MQI's Riverbank, one room is reserved for some very special companions to the men and women who are homeless in Ireland – their trusted animal friends. And it's having an extraordinary knock-on effect...*

**I**n 2017, the Dublin Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (DSPCA) approached MQI with a powerful idea. As the numbers of people on Ireland's streets continued to climb, they wondered: could they host a biweekly clinic at MQI offering free drop-in veterinary care for the



Thanks to your support and to the Dublin Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, a free biweekly veterinary clinic at MQI is helping the pets of people with no homes – and helping the people, too.

beloved pets of those men and women with no homes? Alan Dooley, who was head of day services at Riverbank at the time, jumped at the chance. "It's a well-known fact the therapeutic impact that pets have on us," he said, of the sense of security, love, and connection pets provide. "People's existence on the streets can be quite bleak, not knowing from one night to another where they'll be sleeping. The impact of a pet coming in is remarkable."

The clinic has been a success ever since – with a surprising knock-on effect. Alan, who is now in his twenty-third year with MQI, explains. "We're trying to break down the barriers that keep people from coming to us. Not only do the pets get care at the clinic, it lets us link in with people that we haven't had the opportunity to before, and with their consent, allow them to avail of the many services we have



“He's my best pal,” said Ken, “I'd be lost without him. It's a great service.”

on offer here at Merchants Quay Ireland.” Pauline, who has been the DSPCA clinic's vet nurse since the start in 2017, added that pets come to her having been really well looked after. Today she receives a visit from Ken and Buddy\*, a gentle beagle wearing a clean, bright, reflective collar who is there for a check-up. “He's my best pal,” said Ken, “I'd be lost without him. It's a great service.” ■ \*not their real names

**Thank you to the DSPCA for this wonderful free service, and thank you to you, for giving people who are homeless a place to turn – those with animal friends, and those without.**

## A Christmas Gratitude Concert That's Especially for You

The Dublin Concert Band will return once again for MQI's annual Christmas Gratitude Concert and carol singing, in honour of the great good you do to transform the lives of vulnerable people right here at home.

**When:** Sunday, 15th December, from 3.30 to 5pm

**Where:** Adam & Eve Church, 4 Merchants Quay, Dublin 8 (opposite the Four Courts)

**RSVP:** To join us for this uplifting event, reserve your free places with Emma by Friday, 13th December, on **01 524 0965** or **emma.murphy@mqi.ie**. Include as many of your nearest and dearest as you like!



*For the helping hand you extend to good people in dire need all year, our Christmas songs will be for you. Thank you, from the heart, and we hope to see you there.*

Request donations instead of presents, and add meaning to your next birthday...

## Give Your Birthday to Those in Need



*Did you know that – simply by pledging your next birthday on Facebook – you can request donations instead of presents, to help people who are homeless and hungry in Ireland?*

**I**t's easy. Just go to **www.facebook.com/MerchantsQuayIR** and click 'Create Fundraiser.' There you can set a fundraising goal, track your progress, and share your fundraiser with friends and family via email or social media. They can donate securely with just a few clicks!

What's more, Facebook Fundraisers are free – and MQI receives 100% of the birthday money you raise, to give people a fresh start here at home. Want to pledge a different special occasion? You can do that as well. For more details, we're here to help: Ring us anytime on **01 524 0139** or email to **supportercare@mqi.ie**. Here's to the most meaningful birthdays of all! ■



Where Even the Smallest

## AUTUMN Wishes



Work Wonders

*In a bit of sad news, the loss of the storage room at our Riverbank homeless centre has left us storing extra items wherever we can – so this autumn's Wish List is limited to the most essential, highest priority necessities. If you can donate any of these barebones basics, please know they will go to immediate use for a person in need who will be thankful for the dignity and comfort you give...*

- ✓ New, packaged underwear for both women and men
- ✓ New packaged socks, hats, scarves, and gloves
- ✓ Toiletries of all kinds: shampoo, shower gel, shaving gear, toothbrushes, and toothpaste
- ✓ Clean bath towels, new or used



**Give your items in person** to MQI at 24 Merchants Court, 9:30am to 5pm, Monday to Thursday, to 4:30pm on Friday. Or if you're in Dublin and can't come to us, ring **Emma on 01 524 0965**. We'll call to collect your donated items in the New Year, and bring the MQI photo album. And thank you for every autumn wish you make come true.

*Thank you!*



**Merchants Quay Ireland**  
Homeless & Drugs Services

Merchants Quay Ireland  
24 Merchants Quay,  
P.O. Box 11958, Dublin 8

To make your gift by phone: please ring us on 01 524 0139.

- ☎ **Telephone:** 01 524 0139
- 👤 **Volunteering:** 01 524 0128
- ✉ **Email:** supportercare@mqi.ie
- 🌐 **Website:** www.mqi.ie
- 📘 **Facebook:** Merchants Quay Ireland
- 🐦 **Twitter:** @MerchantsQuayIR

At MQI we respect everyone who turns to us for help – and many are just beginning their fresh start in life. So while client stories are genuine and true, names are changed and stock photographs of models are used for illustrative purposes and to protect client privacy. Thank you for your understanding.